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HHS Deputy Secretary Azar Travels with First Senior U.S. Delegation to Libya since the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations

During a visit to Tripoli from July 10-13, 2006, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II joined a delegation of top U.S. officials for the first high-level visit since the two nations resumed full diplomatic relations on June 30, 2006. Azar is the most senior Arab-American in the Bush Administration.

“Health care is a bridge to peace and cooperation in health affairs is a way forward for Libya and the United States,” Deputy Secretary Azar said. “This trip laid a firm foundation for a robust engagement on health issues between the United States and Libya to enhance the Libyan people’s quality of life and to further integrate Libya into the international community.”

Under Secretary of State Paula Dobriansky, Ph.D. led the delegation which also included Deputy Secretary of Commerce David Sampson, Ph.D., and the Executive Officer of the National Academy of Sciences William Colglazier, Ph.D.

The Delegation met with Libyan Prime Minister Al-Baghdadi Ali Al-Mahmudi, Foreign Minister Abd al Rahman Shalgham, Secretary of the General's People's Committee for Health and the Environment Mohammed Rashid, and other high-level Libyan government officials on a range of science and technology issues.

One item on the agenda was discussion of international cooperation on health issues, including the possibility of a \$1 million-dollar program administered by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to assist the Libyan government to undertake pandemic influenza planning, upgrade disease surveillance and response measures, and to increase laboratory capacity. Deputy Secretary Azar and His Excellency Habib Tamer, Under Secretary of the General People's Committee for Health and the Environment for Libya, signed a letter of intent to allow for cooperation on influenza to proceed.

For more information, please visit www.globalhealth.gov.

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